

February 20th, 2017

Dear Senator Osten, Senator Formica, and Representative Walker

As an alumni of the creative writing program at the Educational Center for the Arts in New Haven (ECA), I'm writing to tell you how instrumental ECA was in nurturing me into the person I am today. Not only did it help me find my writing voice, but it gave me self-confidence. As an introverted girl who went to school in a mostly-white suburban town, spending my afternoons in New Haven with fellow creatives opened a whole new world to me. *It's okay to be different. It's okay to speak your mind. Let's explore; let's find our voices.* And ECA supported and nourished each and every voice.

Today I am a published author; I have had work published in literary journals as well as on websites like *elephant journal* and *Be You Media Group*. I recently published my first book of poetry. I never gave up on the dream I had when I was sitting in class all those years ago. My experience at ECA is one I wish every student could have. The arts are more than “extra-curricular” hobbies—they are the very foundation of the human spirit. It is my sincere wish that programs like ECA continue to receive funding in order to encourage further generations of artists, writers, actors, and musicians.

Best regards,

Dejah Beauchamp
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